1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

286 The weaving of cloth is, as has already been said, now almost extinct in Zongu; in Lingthem only a couple of women—the wives of Datoop and Jiroong—weave at all regularly. Lepcha cloths are extremely finely woven; nearly all are in striped patterns, sometimes over a plain, and sometimes over a patterned background. I have been shown such cloths further ornamented with needlework embroidery, but I did not see any so enhanced in Zongu. Although weaving is now almost a lost art, the spindle is considered the [562] typical feminine symbol, as the arrow is the masculine one; and in stories the heavy bar of the loom is the woman's chief weapon.

301 Although no attempt is made to add 'beauty' to the ordinary objects and surroundings of life, both men and women wear a certain amount of jewellery. The men wear turquoise ear-rings and rings, the women heavy and elaborate necklaces of big and usually unworked semi-precious stones, often with a charm-box of fretted gold or silver inlaid with turquoise and coral suspended from them, and also occasionally brooches and bracelets; but all these jewels are bought ready-made. They are considered to enhance the beauty [556] of the wearer; they are also a display of wealth and the only possible form of investment. Young people occasionally display a certain amount of coquetry in their dress, but the effect is usually unfortu- [515] nately marred for the stranger owing to the Lepchas' habit of not washing their bodies.

iv

342 Nowadays new houses are built very rarely. According to Chala Mandal—the head of the village of Lingthem, and also of the smaller village of Panung to the east with ten houses, and Lik-lyang (five houses) Salim and Safo (three houses each) on the other side of the Talung river—only four new houses have been built in the [592] present century. Ordinarily the members of a Lepcha household do not separate, but if the family gets too numerous, or if brothers, either real or classificatory, do not agree, the household will split and the land be divided and the younger brother will build a house of his own. Three of the four new houses—those of Ongden, Kurma and Nahyeun—were built for this reason. In the case of the fourth house—that of Katel—the situation was more complicated 342 and irregular. Katel, a man from a village on the far side of Zongu, 592 married a woman of Lingthem, an orphan who had been brought up in the Mandal's house, and took her home to his village. But

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

hunting of any other animal); if this rule is not observed the bears will escape from their trap unharmed. Bear skins and also their gall bladders which are much sought after by the Chinese as aphrodisiacs (they fetch Rs. 5 apiece in Kalimpong) were an inducement to catch these animals when money was not plentiful or non-existent; nowadays with money from cardamum there is less economic justification for taking the risks involved. Catching small birds in snares does not count as hunting; it is one of the commonest pursuits of boys after the age of about eight, who take their catches home as presents for their mother.

ii

The agricultural land in Zongu can be divided into two categories: the land under permanent cultivation, and the land which is cleared for crops once in every eight years. The permanent cultivation is of three types; there is the *sing* or field-garden against the house, cardamum fields and rice terraces. The two latter types of cultivation, which are now of very great importance in Lepcha life, are both very modern: cardamum was introduced at the beginning of the century, rice terraces for wet paddy less than twenty years ago. Potentially this permanent cultivation has introduced a new note into Lepcha life, though so far the effect is not noticeable. Both cardamum fields and rice terraces demand a certain amount of hard initial labour, after which they acquire, as it were, a capital value; this is less true of cardamum, which needs replanting every ten years, than of the rice terraces; to build these a considerable amount of work is needed, but once they are made a heavy crop can be raised from them with relatively little labour.

Until the beginning of this century the wealth of a Lepcha household depended on the energy of its members and on the proportion of able-bodied adults to dependants—children and the old and invalid—; if there was more than one dependent to one able-bodied adult life was liable to be rather hard. Nowadays it is theoretically possible that a lazy heir of industrious ancestors might be in a better position in the community than his own industry warranted. Formerly the inevitable rule of Lepcha economy was 'from each according to his ability; to each according to his work', tempered by the co-operation and willing help which was and is freely given to those afflicted by temporary or permanent

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 . . AK5 Lepcha AK5

misfortune. Today this is not quite so true; the creation of permanent fields requires the renunciation of immediate good for future benefits, for the household which builds these fields will not be able to get as large a harvest as would otherwise be possible. The consequence is that the difference between the richest and the poorest in the community has somewhat increased, and that households which have a proportionately larger number of working adults to dependents are in a temporarily favoured position. So of course is the Mandal,[1] who can use the free labour to which he is entitled to have terraces made for him.

Up to the present as far as I can tell this new state of affairs has made no important difference to the Lepcha community; their habits of co-operation nullify the differences in wealth. One man even went so far as to say that he would not like to be the richest person in the community, unless everybody else was equally prosperous, as he would have to give all his superfluity to help others. Extra wealth carries with it extra duties; and in point of fact the richest people in Lingthem were also the most heavily indebted. At the same time it must be emphasised that it is the desire of every Lepcha to be rich; when I asked children what they would most like to be, a clever man, or a learned and respected lama, or a great hunter, or a rich man, they would one and all plump for being rich. Chimpet, the son of Tafoor, a member of the most devout lamaist family in Lingthem, and who was himself starting his religious instruction said 'I should like to go and study religion in a Tibetan monastery, but I don't want to go to the State school at Gangtok; the things they teach you there are quite useless, while a lama always gets good presents and feasts. Why, when a rich man dies even the *kané*, the accolyte attending the officiating lama, is given a fine plate and cup and clothes!'[2]

Unless the whole orientation of Lepcha life is changed even greater differences in actual wealth will not fundamentally alter the situation, for there is no possibility of any Lepcha, however rich, exploiting his neighbour, however poor. Help in the work of house or field is always repaid by equivalent help; the most

[1] See Chapter Five, p. 128.

[2] Chimpet's view of the value of secular education is not shared by his father or the other more serious adult members of the community. They have petitioned the State to establish a boarding school in Zongu, for they consider that the extra work entailed by the older children's absence would be counterbalanced by the value of the education received.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

feckless or unlucky who have not the ground to use the help which is their due are given grain for their labour. Only with cardamum, which is a money-producing, and not a food-producing crop, is help paid for with money. The care of orphans, cripples, idiots and other helpless people in exchange for the labour they can give cannot be considered as exploitation.

Although riches and prosperity are so desirable they are fraught with supernatural dangers; there is a devil called Ginoo *moong* which attacks the over-prosperous; it is in a way Nemesis, and in a way the incarnation of other people's envious thoughts. The origin of Ginoo *moong* is told in the following story:

'Once upon a time there was a family called Ginoo, which consisted of seven brothers and one sister. The seven brothers had a house in Lingthem up above the monastery; they had seven wives and seven sons and seven daughters and seven sons-in-law and seven daughters-in-law; they were so numerous that they could do all the field-work between here and Mangan in one day and would eat between them a whole goat at one meal. However these people had no oxen, no jewels, and no permanent cultivation.[3] When they went out to work two people had to stop at home to do the cooking and one to gather leaves for the fire. Their sister lived lower in the valley; she was a widow and had a single daughter, but she had sixty heads of oxen and many necklaces and jewels, so heavy that they weighed six seers. This woman was a Mun; she lived in the house, while her daughter slept in a shed.

'Now the brothers grumbled and spoke among themselves saying "We have nothing, no jewels and no cattle, and we could use them; our sister is a widow and excessively rich; if we were to kill her we should possess all her wealth." So they made a plan and they went up to her house at dead of night and cut her to pieces with their knives and crept back unobserved. When this occurred the daughter who was sleeping in the shed woke up with a start, thinking "What is the matter with my mother?" And she was frightened and ran to her mother's house. When she arrived there she found the verandah spattered with blood, and inside her mother sat trembling. The brothers had hacked her body to pieces but she was a very powerful Mun and all the pieces had joined together. The mother said to her daughter "Why have you come? Your maternal uncles have killed me. Now you are here go and gather

[3] It is interesting to note the manner in which these very recent signs of wealth have been incorporated into the old story.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

'From that time Ginoo *moong pandi* and Linthem *anyou* destroy all those who are too prosperous or have too many children. That is the reason why you should never remark on a person's prosperity; for if Ginoo *moong* hears you they will lose everything.'

Ginoo *moong* still claims victims today. One of the latest was the wife of Ongden, one of the richest members of the community, unique in having six healthy sons. She was always grumbling, saying how poor she was and how little ground they had been able to sow; to which the neighbours would reply 'How greedy you are; you are really very prosperous.' Ginoo *moong* heard this talk, and so she died, while still young. It is also perhaps the fear of Ginoo *moong* which makes Lepchas so reluctant to say what their property is; it was practically the only subject on which people were secretive and unwilling to talk; most of the information I obtained on the subject I got from neighbours. The majority of the households are all on nearly the same economic level; four or five are somewhat above, and three below the average.

iii

The chief crops raised by the Lepchas on the Talung side of Zongu are wet rice, dry rice, buckwheat, maize, cardamum, and different varieties of millet or eleusine. On the warmer Teesta side a certain amount of sugar cane and manioc is also raised. The wet rice is naturally exclusively cultivated on the terraced fields, which are capable of being flooded. Seven different types of wet rice are recognised—two of them being suitable for cultivation on the higher terraces, while the other five need the warmer climate of the valley. Some of the richer people grow these five varieties in rotation, as this is believed to rest the soil, the variety sown depending on individual choice; in these cases the seed is not saved, but is bought each year, generally from Gangtok. The majority however only grow one variety and save their own seed.

In Lingthem wet rice has been introduced for less than twenty years, and in other villages even more recently; some places, especially on the far side of the Talung, where the natural water is less plentiful, do not grow it yet. When the Mandal first learned about this crop he had experimental terraces made for three years; it was then gradually adopted by the other villagers, as they became convinced of the superior yield of this crop, and the amount of terraced ground is increased annually. Almost every household

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

has at least a couple of terraces and some considerably more. These terraces are scattered all over the valley, and it is rare for two contiguous strips to belong to the same owner. It is theoretically permissible to exchange plots so that they shall be better grouped, but nobody considers doing so.

The rice terraces are turned with a rough single-pointed wooden plough drawn by a pair of oxen, as is the *sing* or field-garden near the house. Except on these artificially levelled places the ground is too precipitous for the use of a plough to be possible. Two main crops are raised in the field-garden annually; first a mixture of barley and wheat, and subsequently maize. These grains are chiefly raised as stop-gap crops, and for fermenting; maize is thought little of, and to eat much of it is the surest sign of poverty. A number of fruits and vegetables are also raised on the edge of the field-garden to give a variety of flavourings to the main rice dish; the greater number of these are importations from India, such as various varieties of pulse, tomatoes and chilli; some of them however are wild plants found locally and domesticated; such are various lavatera, arums and alliums. The collection of some of these wild plants have some ritual attached to them; the allium *safyou* for example, which is only found in one place, must be dug up with sharpened sticks; if knives are used the supernatural Jamfi *moong* will be angry and throw sticks at the collectors and cause hail and thunder. Even more unpleasant is the mountain plant *chok-li bi* (probably a sort of rhubarb) which is said to be delicious; however you gather that plant hail will fall as the stems are picked.

Cardamum is grown in small clearings all over the lower slopes of the valley. It is a perennial plant propagated by cuttings which are taken in the early spring; the plant reaches its full bearing period within three years; at the end of ten years it starts to decline and new plantings have to be made; this can however be done on the same ground as the plant does not exhaust the soil. The plants need a good deal of care, and have to be hand-weeded at least three times a year, for the buds and fruit form close to the ground. When the fruit is gathered the old growth is cut down and burned. Cardamum plants are a favourite hiding-place for snakes. For the Lepchas cardamum is a foreign importation from Nepal; they always refer to it by its Nepali name—*elaiji*—and with the cultivation of the plant has come a whole complex of alien beliefs and ritual. Nothing is done when the

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

of cooking dishes and compounding the various ingredients; but on the whole the material provided is of more importance than the cooking. Except that a meal with meat is universally preferred to one without there does not seem to be any particularly favourite food; Tafoor voiced the general opinion when he said his favourite dish was *chi*. I did not get enough detailed menus to be able to state with certainty how often meat is usually eaten inside the household; from such information as I have got I should say richer people eat it three or four times a week, poor people once or twice. When it is available it is eaten in the morning and evening.

Lepcha diet is relatively monotonous, notably less highly spiced than the food of the Nepali or Indians; there are no devices for tempting jaded palates; food is to satisfy hunger, and enough is as bad as a meal. A feast definitely implies over-eating, and it is quite a common subject among old people to deplore that their powers of over-eating are failing; that once upon a time they could eat fourteen pounds of meat in a day, and now they cannot manage four with comfort! These actual figures were used by Adér, who is well over seventy and has lost half his teeth.

As can be seen, the Lepchas have, for a primitive people, a remarkably high standard of living, as far as food and drink is concerned; it is certainly far higher than that of the Lepchas outside Zongu or any of the neighbouring peoples that I know of. Levelling out the answers I have received and my own observations, I should say that the average consumption of grain annually by an adult Lepcha is about 400 lbs.; besides that about another 300 lbs. is consumed for *chi*. These quantities naturally do not allow for entertainment or gifts. There are three households who perhaps do not quite reach this standard, those of Dunbi, Nahyeun and Pargeut. Dunbi is said to be the poorest man in the village, but this is chiefly his own fault, for he sits about drinking and gossiping instead of working. Nahyeun is a young man fairly recently married; he is reputed to be Dunbi's bastard and is himself not over energetic. He recently married Tobgé's sister and they have set up house on their own because his wife did not agree with the two wives of Asang, with whom he formerly lived; they consequently have no reserves and few permanent fields. The third poor man, Pargeut, is really unfortunate; he has six small children of which only the two eldest are of an age to help him, and they are girls betrothed outside the village; he has also a very

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

old mother to support, and he suffers himself from some sort of recurrent fever.

These households, and a few others, may get short of grain in the early summer and be driven to look for food in the forest to supplement the gifts they get; most households have usually a a small surplus at the end of the year which they use for extra feasting and presents. From the point of view of crops, though not necessarily of money, the richest householders are the Mandal, Tafoor, Takneum *youmi*, Tingkep and Chelim. The first two are considered to be the best hosts, at whose house the finest food and drink is obtained.

V

Although of secondary importance as far as diet is concerned, domestic animals play a considerable rôle in the life of the Lepchas. Nearly all the ceremonies of the Mun demand animal sacrifices; animals are essential for the socio-religious celebrations of birth, marriage and death; and consequently people with few or no animals who get ill or have children or marry or die are at a considerable disadvantage and have to borrow animals for these ceremonies. Much of the indebtedness incurred with money lenders has been for the purchase of animals. Though the Lepcha can, and often does, borrow animals from his neighbours, he appears to feel a discomfort in being indebted to a friend which he does not feel towards the money lenders.

By far the most important animal is oxen;[7] they are still the chief sign of wealth and a person with twenty head of cattle is considered a rich man. Their meat is the most esteemed and at important feasts, or if a person wants to make a display, it is always an ox which is killed. They are never used as beasts of burden (no animals are so used) but occasionally for ploughing; a certain amount of milk and butter is got from milch-cows. Only the most savage bulls are castrated. Cows are not mated and no pedigrees are kept.

Except for young calves, milch cows, and bullocks temporarily in use for ploughing, the animals are never tethered or herded; they wander all over the common land round the village where pasturage and wood-gathering are free; every evening they

[7] The Lepcha cattle have no hump; they resemble small European rather than Indian cattle. They have small horns and every variety and combination of colouring.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

Lamaist horoscopes, like European ones, are automatic in their application, and, in the event of two or more people being born or dying in the same hour the horoscopes will be identical. The Lepchas thoroughly believe in the validity of the horoscopes and almost always carry out their instructions implicitly. It is believed that the defectives are abnormal because they or their parents neglected the indicated precautions.

It is only with the ceremonies prescribed by horoscopes that the possibility arises of a Lepcha failing to perform indicated ceremonies. Lamas come spontaneously to assist the soul of a dead man, and their presence, though usual, is not essential on any other occasion; in the case of present or threatened illness or danger the sufferer summons the lama to perform the requisite ceremonies; if for any reason he did not wish to perform the ceremonies he would not send for the priest.

On the whole the extent of employment of lamas by laymen depends on the personal inclination and beliefs of the layman in question. The greater number of lamaist ceremonies demand less expenditure than equivalent ones by Mun, since they do not involve the killing of animals. This generalisation must however be modified in one particular. Apart from jewels the only possible method of conspicuous expenditure for the ambitious is the erection of a lamaist altar in the *dé-ong* of his house and the purchase of the Boom or some other anthology of the lamaist scriptures. Once these are installed the visits of lamas at fairly constantly recurring intervals are essential for the reading of the scriptures and the performance of the necessary rites. Scriptures have to be read four times a year and since no layman can read, lamas have to be hired, feasts given to them and fees paid to them. This expense can only be stopped by selling or giving away the sacred books or objects.

Belief in horoscopes does not induce a feeling of fatalism, for every misfortune foretold carries with it its appropriate remedy. Unless a layman's child is predestined to become a lama people usually know nothing at all of their own first horoscopes, nor do parents usually remember for long the horoscope cast for their children. I never heard of an instance of an angry parent or elder sibling reproach a child because of the expense it had necessitated, nor throw in their face their unfavourable forecast. Even when people were trying to convince me of the validity of horoscopes they never quoted the realisation of past horoscopes, but only the

I: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

593 exclaiming: 'May that man die!' Whenever Nariya went to visit
585 her she used to throw stones at him to drive him away. It was said that she was carrying on a love affair with a Nepali in her distant village. On one occasion the girl's parents came to Lingthem, but Nariya was too shy to say anything. At the end of April Tempa said that he threatened the parents that if they did not send the girl he would apply to the police station. He explained that he spoke after consultation with the Mandal because Nariya's uncle Ashyok had not enough sense.

On May 11th, 1937, Nariya went to fetch his wife home; on May 17th she returned with him but bringing with her a younger brother aged twelve to sleep with her as a chaperone. On May 18th she went away again to Mangan to see her father, but she returned still accompanied by the younger brother on May 20th. On this day took place one of the bi-monthly monastery feasts and Nariya's wife took this opportunity to become formally introduced into the village community. Although she still did not sleep with her husband she seemed to be settling down and was helping in the preparations for the big annual feast of Boom koor which was to take place three days later, helping with the cooking and so on. She did not talk much but sat about quite comfortably in the groups where people made rather a fuss of her. All the time she kept some small child by her, either her own younger brother or Pankek, a little girl of six. She seemed to find comfort in the presence of young children. Tobgé was familiar with her, hugging her and feeling her breasts, but she showed no resentment. She had on a clean new green blouse but a filthy dirty skirt. The general belief was that in a day or so Nariya would succeed in sleeping with her and that then the marriage would settle down completely and happily.

Nariya it is true was not a very attractive character. He had an extraordinarily high-pitched almost eunochoid voice and a slightly sly expression. He was an orphan; his father, when he lived, was the richest man in Lingthem and a great deal of the wealth in cattle had been expended on the funeral feasts for him and many other relations of his generation who had died very close to one another. Nariya wished to regain his father's wealth and was
● [556] therefore, most exceptionally for a Lepcha, engaged in strenuous economies, spending as little as he could, except when he had to give feasts, on clothes or food; he was rather secretive.

Of the other recently married men Rigya, Nariya's cousin and

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

Men with large penises are considered virile

women more immediate satisfaction, but to be on the whole less fertile; there are, however, some anecdotes told of mothers procuring large-penised lovers to impregnate their daughters when their husbands have been unable to do so. The size and shape of the genitals of the men in the neighbourhood is a common subject for conversation; and such exact anatomical details are known and described that it would seem as though the privacy and secrecy enjoyed after the fire is damped down were by no means absolute.

A couple of Tibetan prostitutes live at Mangan on the other side of the Teesta River to cater for the transitory Tibetan muleteers. A couple of the Lepchas of Lingthem have made use of their services for the fee of one rupee. Kurma said he preferred these women because, in contrast to Lepcha women, they were energetic during the act. The hiring of these women constitutes a display of superfluous wealth and an act of dare-devilry; the Lepchas consider their presence as one of the comic curiosities of the neighbourhood, but think it rather absurd for anybody to pay for sexual intercourse.

It is considered by most Lepchas extremely dangerous to sleep with a menstruating woman; Chala Mandal said that he personally would not be afraid, but the general belief is that the man who does so will be unwell and doltish afterwards for a period that some men put at a week and others at three years. It is a general belief that women are particularly desirous directly after menstruation and a few consider that impregnation is most likely to take place at that time. Old Hlatam the 'poisoner' has even gone so far as to warn her daughters to be particularly careful of that period so as to avoid bastards; but this belief is by no means generally held, and it would seem to be an importation from the Nepali, who, Major Morris says, have turned this belief into a cultural act of faith. During their actual periods girls will tell their lovers that they are unwell, but the great majority pay no attention to the subsequent days. There is also a vague belief that it is possible to foretell conception if the man is especially tired and the woman especially passionate.

Although sexual enjoyment is believed to continue for both sexes up to an advanced old age, the sexual activities of old people are considered rather ludicrous. One of Chudo's most successful and appreciated jokes was his vivid description of the noises he heard nightly coming from the sleeping place of his sixty-nine-year-old 'grandfather' the second Dorjé Lapoon and his seventy-four-year-old bride Pumri; and the first Dorjé Lapoon's attempts at eighty-

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

loops on the circumference[4] and NI in Tibetan script inscribed in the middle. On this is set a bamboo *patyoot* about a cubit high and a little broader than that usually employed for *chi* drinking, with a rupee in the bottom and filled with grain; into this is stuck an upright bamboo of the height of the corpse when sitting and at shoulder height is an inserted cross-piece the width of the dead person's shoulders. On top of this is placed a piece of paper supported on a square stretcher: this is stamped with a die representing a divine face; it is the same for all ages and conditions, but different for each sex; it is inscribed with the name of the dead person. Then this dummy is clothed with the clothes of the dead person so arranged as to look as if it was sitting with the legs crossed and feet hidden and hands folded. A big scarf which has to be borrowed or bought for the occasion is draped from the image's behind up the back and over the face, so that the paper mask is hidden.

This image is placed in the *dé-ong* facing the lamas, who sit on the right of the altar; in front of the image are three tables. On the first table are seven small cones of rice, seven *chimi*, two pots of water and two pots of rice; on the second table is a plate and cup and all sorts of food; on the third are the dead person's jewels, if it was a woman, or the knife and bow-and-arrows if a man. A little to the left before the first table is a *patyoot* of *chi*; behind and a little to the left must sit the Mourner—the surviving spouse if there is one, or failing that any near relation. The Mourner only has to be present when the image is given food or talked to. Except right at the end other ordinary people do not come into the *dé-ong*.

If the dead man was a lama all the lamas of the neighbourhood will come automatically; if he was a layman only two are necessary, a Dorjé Lapoon and a *kané*. Old and experienced men are allowed to sit with the lamas. A certain number of nuns with their prayer-wheels are necessary; they sit against the wall opposite the altar.

[556] The length of the ceremony depends on the wealth of the deceased. If he was a poor man it will only last twenty-four hours; if he was rich, up to seven days. The *chi* offered to the corpse is changed three times daily, the food twice; each meal must have some meat in it and also tea, rice and all vegetable foods. When the meal

[4] There would seem to be a connection between this nine-looped circle, and the nine-handled cup used in the ritual to expel Shidook *moong*, but I could not learn what this connection is.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

X 159 She was the same year as me; it was my first time but I don't think it was hers. Afterwards my parents wanted to *asék* her but she was already bespoke. Next I was *asék* to another girl, but we didn't get on together and later the Mandal arranged for the *asék* to be broken. Finally I was *asék* to my present wife.[7] For the first two or three years we used to dislike one another very much; when she saw me she used to exclaim: "May this boy die young!" This always happens when the parents arrange a marriage between two people who don't know one another. Even when she came to live with me we slept apart at first; I tried to copulate with her but she pushed me away, and I was afraid to use force because she might beat me. But everybody gave her advice and presents—money and clothes and jewels—my parents and the Mandal and the other women in the village. At first we couldn't even look at one another, but now we're friendly; when I go out to work and come back tired my wife has food ready for me and looks after me, and I love her and think in my belly "This is my wife," and I am pleased.

X 159 ● 556 'Nariya's father was the richest man in the neighbourhood—richer than the Mandal—but much money was lost over a lawsuit concerning Nariya's first wife, the girl from Lingmu. The girl was a wicked girl who slept with everybody; and when she ran away she stole Rs. 150 in cash as well as taking her clothes and jewels; and her father borrowed Rs. 120 from Nariya's father and never paid it back. Besides these losses the lawsuit cost Nariya and the girl's father Rs. 200 each. Before that time he had had sixty head of cattle; the girl ruined him. The girl when alone used to live on the fat of the land, killing hens, and so on, for herself.

'Nariya's cardamum amounts to 15 maunds, mine to 20, and my wife's to 5 maunds. Nariya has eleven oxen, I five, and my wife none. Many oxen were killed because no less than seven people died in the house, and an ox was killed for each *sanglion* and also for the memorial feast a year later. Also my marriage cost three oxen; one was given for *asék*, instead of the two pigs, and two at the marriage. It is good to have plenty of cattle because then for ceremonies and so on you are completely independent and do not have to borrow; also you can sell butter to the kanya at Mangan who pay from Rs –/8 to Rs. 1 for 2 lbs.

'None of us owe a penny to the kanya, nor indeed except for some meat from neighbours, an anna to anybody else. We are

[7] Who had been formerly *asék*'d to his two brothers. See Chapter Six, p. 157.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

all three, saving up as hard as we can to have a really pukka house with a tin roof and good floors; for this reason we are denying ourselves practically everything except the barest necessities until we get our house. (*His eyes gleamed as he spoke about this.*) We wear the plainest of clothes; my wife has no jewels, but puts the money aside from her cardamum to pay for the house; we only eat plain food, just rice. Others waste a lot of crops for *chi* but we don't; now and again we have a little but between whiles we just drink tea. *We* don't get into debt for showy clothes and useless gew-gaws. Even now I am really richer than Tafoor who has lots and lots of debts; and as for my father (Ashyok) and my elder brother (Aplung), why they haven't anything; as soon as they get a rupee they go and spend it and never save a *pice*. Of course we give feasts; if we did not follow the *lungthen* (custom) and perform the proper ceremonies we would die. Yes, it is nice when we give the monastery feast; our turn comes in the winter; last year we gave a pig. But soon—soon—we will have the lovely house with the tin roof; there won't be another one like it in Lingthem, though I have heard that the younger brother of Takneum who lives at Tangvong has got one. As soon as we have saved up enough money we will give the measurements to the kanya and they will get the corrugated iron. We would certainly never think of going to buy *chi* as other people do if we run out of it.'

ii

An important group of deviants are the defectives. Of these there are three, all males; they are Sangkyar, the elder son of Gongyop's eldest brother (now dead: the other son is lame Satéo), the middle son of Asang, and Kanden, the elder son of Také and the elder brother of Dadool. Although Sangkyar is very different from the other two, all three show the same symptoms of compulsive wandering, and this is considered by Lepchas to be an inevitable concomitant to feeble-mindedness in males: indeed they are called 'wanderers'. This symptom does not apparently show itself in girls and women; I neither saw nor heard of similarly afflicted girls.

Sangkyar I only saw once. He has a typically cretinous expression and type of behaviour. He is the example *par excellence* of the bad boy, the *tané*; he wanders about and sleeps in the forest and steals from other people's houses and fields. He takes food and

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

two, but, so his son says, spends most of his nights with the senior.

Mrs. Chötembu number one, like her mother, is a Mun, but is mainly in request as a singer of songs, of which she has an immense repertoire. I once came across the family working in the fields and asked her to give us a tune. I think she misunderstood my meaning; for it was only when I told her that I was really a *Ge-lug-pa*, or celibate monk, that she finally left me alone: but it took some months to convince her. I should add, however, that her advances were always made in public and caused much amusement to the rest of the family.

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Datoop is the elder son of the senior Dorje Lopön. Until relieved by Lumbar he acted as Chötembu for over three years, and is now awaiting advancement to the rank of Umzet. As a boy he spent some years in Gangtok, where he was trained as a carpenter, at which trade he is still employed. He superintends most local building, and with the assistance of the *Hlaribu*, or artist, made most of the woodwork in the Lingtem monastery. He was married at nineteen to a girl seven years his junior, but the pair did not live together until after his return from Gangtok, some five years later. He becomes almost heated when discussing his father's affairs, but thinks it unlikely that he will marry again, since "he is now too old for that sort of thing." He says he would rather live in some place like Gangtok, "where there are people to see and gossip to hear; bazaars to walk in and all sorts of things to buy; but what can one do? Town life is easy, since one does not work in the fields: but without work in the fields money is not forthcoming, so it is better to stay at home." Datoop thinks it good to die rich, since then one's children can do the death ceremony in a proper manner. It would be nice to live to eighty, as up to that age most men can still work in the fields: but to live on till a hundred is definitely staying too long. One does not want to be a burden to others.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 9

Agriculture and Kindred Subjects

THE main crops in Lingtem are rice (grown both "dry" and "wet," the latter in terraced fields), millet, buckwheat, maize, and barley. The method of growing rice under water in terraced fields, which the Nepali has brought to a fine art, was apparently only introduced into Lingtem some twenty years ago, although Hooker mentions it as being commonly employed in other parts of Sikkim, which he visited as long ago as 1848.

Most Lepchas seem to think that rice grown in terraces is somewhat sweeter to the taste; but that rice grown dry is more nourishing. To me, and I imagine to most Europeans, one kind of rice tastes much the same as another: but people who have made this crop their staple diet are as critical of the various brands as a sunbaked colonel is of his port. But whether dry rice is actually more nourishing is at least open to doubt: what, however, is certain is that the construction of terraces for growing rice under water entails very considerable labour; and I imagine that the Lepcha's natural indolence has led him to prefer the dry variety.

Such terraced fields as there were in Lingtem were badly kept and inefficiently constructed. It would be perfectly easy, as my Nepali servant constantly pointed out, to increase the yield considerably. The point is, however, that the present arrangement gives the Lepcha all he wants to eat. Beyond this he is not interested, for the idea of personal wealth is here not greatly esteemed. From one point of view this is, of course, a most desirable state of affairs. I fear, however, that in the case of the Lepchas it comes more from his indolent habits that from any innate socialist feeling, although this is not entirely absent. There is no doubt, to

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

of the fontanel, and remains on the baby's head until it wears away. At the same time snail-shells, as already described, are tied round its neck and wrists and sometimes fastened to its clothing. 852

There is also a ceremony on the third day after birth, which is called *Pa-Gong Chi-tong*, the latter part of which word means merely *chi*-drinking—an indispensable part of all Lepcha ceremonies. [273]

Very early in the morning, before any of the guests arrive, the floor is swept with wormwood and a little incense is burned. At the same time a Mun will come and wave offerings over the mother, should she have required his (or her) services on account of a difficult delivery; but if the birth was normal this office is omitted. The Mun takes a previously boiled chicken, divides it, and sets it on a tray, together with parched rice, ginger, and some pieces of wild birds' flesh. There is also the usual buttered cup for libations of *chi*, and the whole is offered to the god of birth. In the meantime most of the guests will have arrived, and the offering is now divided amongst them. [824] 354

If the child is a boy, and particularly in the case of a first-born, an ox, pig, or goat will be sacrificed. In the case of a girl an animal is not generally slaughtered; but if the family is well-off it is usual to buy some meat and give each of the guests a piece, for true Lepcha hospitality demands that no guest should leave without a present of some sort. Whenever we went to a Lepcha house we were invariably given something to take away. On the occasion of big ceremonies it was usually a portion of the sacrificial meat; but even when we went on an ordinary friendly visit we were always given eggs, milk, or grain. [562] 852 574

In the case of a boy each guest brings one rupee and a ceremonial scarf of butter muslin; but for a girl the usual present is six annas or a chicken. The scarf is not given for girls. 852 431

Only very rich people will go to the expense of sacrificing an animal for a baby girl, and when the Mun offers it to 852 556 562

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

852 [556] 562 [824] the birth-god he will entreat it to send a boy next time. He will concentrate on this matter throughout the third night. He takes three tufts of elephant grass tied up with coloured thread, and attaches them to ordinary finger-rings. He then waves this bunch of grass slowly over the parents of the newly-born child, and afterwards over all present.

852 562 773 Now in Azoom Aru Purtam, a place through which all babies must pass before being born, there is a waterfall called *Lung Fing* and a well called *Rungzel Oonglop*. The waterfall is a boy and the well is a girl. When he concentrates on the matter the Mun is able to visit this place in spirit, when he persuades the god to make the waterfall and the well change places.

The coloured threads with which the elephant grass is tied are offered to the spirit of the waterfall, after which the grass is put in a pot of water and kept on the household altar. A chicken is now offered to Nazong Nyu, the progenitor of the human race, after which the two rings are given to the child's mother to wear. The performance of this ceremony, for which there does not appear to be any specific name, will assure that the next child born is a boy.

852 [787] 553 If a Lama is present on the third day he will work out the child's horoscope and give it a name; otherwise the child's father will go to his house. It may be noted, however, that the names given by Lamas are never used and in many cases are forgotten. Someone present will usually give the child a nickname, which will be selected in accordance with its appearance. Common names of this sort are "the fair one"; "the dark one," and so on; but the most extraordinary one I ever came across was *Kalok Tikung*, which being translated comes to mean "The rat's grandfather." Children are 551 generally called by these nicknames; but otherwise the custom of teknonymy is usual. An adult may occasionally be called by his name, but it is not considered polite to do so; and in no circumstances may a Lama's real name be mentioned. There does not appear to be any objection to